The RECONSTRUCTIONIST

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the Reconstructionist

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The RECONSTRUCTIONIST

Vol. XIV. December 10, 1948 Kislev 8, 5709 No. 16

EDITORIALS

NO GLORY TO EX-TERRORISTS

ONE of the great achievements of the State of Israel is its suppression of terrorism. But just as the Arab states, when their military power was broken, resorted to political measures, so now do the defeated and discredited terrorist organizations. Realizing that, in Israel itself, they are in disrepute and cannot acquire a political war-chest, they are appealing to American Jewry for support. The same American Jews who glossed over and romanticised the atrocities of the Irgun and the Sternists when these were underground organizations are today not only condoning their past misdeeds but supporting their present pretensions.

Menahem Beigin is now in this country on what he calls a "good-will mission." He is being wined and dined by Jews who should know better than to be taken in by such shoddy idealism. He was presented, with a Sefer Torah on landing, as a mark of esteem, and Mizrachi rabbis conferred on him the honor of an *aliyah* at services in their synagogues. His protagonists published flamboyant advertisements in the press hailing him as the logical candidate for premier of the State of Israel, and expounding the party line of the Irgunists, who now call themselves the Freedom Movement.

What short memories we have! How long ago was it that we American Jews were expressing our revulsion against the blowing up of the King David Hotel, against the murder of the two British sergeants, against the atrocities at Deir Yassin. And shall we now acclaim as a conquering hero the responsible leader of the organization that was guilty of these crimes? To be sure, the Freedom Movement now denies most of these atrocities. But it is well known that, at the time when they happened, Irgunists boasted of having perpetrated them.

True, the terror is now a thing of the past, and we do not begrudge those who participated in it the amnesty they enjoy. We know that they held their own lives cheap as well as the lives of others and we recognize their fanatical addiction to violence as a pathological condition induced by mental anguish. We are prepared to forgive them, but not to extol them, nor to condone their past misdeeds.

Their propaganda claims credit for having driven the British out of Eretz Yisrael. That claim is absurd on the face of it. Did the rest of the Yishuv play no part at all in freeing Israel? But even suppose the claim were true; does success in a cause justify every evil means employed to bring it about? We are told

in the book of Genesis (Chapter 28) how the sons of Jacob, led by Simon and Levi, were successful in an outrageous ruse to avenge the rape of their sister on the men of Shechem, a "practical joke" like the booby traps set by the Irgunists in the neighborhood of the tree on which the sergeants were hanged. But the authentic voice of Judaism speaks in the protest against that act by the patriarch Jacob. On his death bed he said of Simon and Levi, "Let my soul not come into their council. Unto their assembly let my glory not be united."

This "good-will mission" of Beigin to America, what is it? What is he doing here? Dinners given in his honor are being made the occasion for raising funds, in competition with the UJA and other legitimate appeals, ostensibly for the rehabilitation of Irgun veterans of the fighting in Israel. But there is no need for any such special funds since, as soldiers in the Israeli army, former Irgunists come under the general provisions for veterans. We leave it to our readers to solve the mystery of what the funds are actually intended for. Can it possibly be to advance the partisan interests of the Freedom Movement in Israel? That movement is a menace. At the very time that the Government of Israel is seeking admission into the UN and is negotiating with the Arab states for the partition of Palestine, the ex-Irgunists announce as their objective the establishment of a Jewish state that shall include Transjordania. Such an irridentist movement conceals the threat of further violence at any time that may seem opportune to the unrepentant perpetrators of past violence.

We are grieved therefore that, so far, the only emphatic condemnation of the tributes being paid to Menahem Beigin and the movement he represents has come from non-Zionists. The condemnation should have come from the Zionist Emergency Council. It should have been zealous for the good name of Israel. It should have vindicated the spiritual purpose behind the Zionist movement. Zionism aims not merely at achieving the survival of the Jewish people, but at achieving for Israel the freedom to fulfil its highest ethical ideals. The statesmanship of the Israeli Government has beeen consistent with that purpose. Its spokesmen have shown remarkable moderation, self-control and fairness. But in America, too many Zionists have succumbed to the hysterical mass-acclaim which violent action so often calls forth. Their leaders should have countered this tendency. They should have taught them, that, from the standpoint of Jewish ethics, terrorism is not heroism. It is moral defeatism. It means surrender of all that the Jewish people have been living and dying for throughout the ages.

CHARGES THAT CALL FOR INVESTIGATION

TWO months ago, we published an editorial on the new immigration law which, we contended, not only discriminated against Jews and others, but made possible the admission to the United States of Nazis and pogromists. We called for a careful screening of all candidates for emigration to our country; and we addressed ourselves particularly to the Jewish defense organizations, asking why no steps had been taken to press for a system of screening.

Since then, boatloads of immigrants have arrived. Others are on their way. The 81st Congress will soon convene. Thus far, we have heard nothing from the Jewish organizations to whom we addressed the challenge. We do not understand how Jewish agencies, which depend to so great an extent upon the support of

voluntary contributors, and the good opinion of the Jewish community, can have ignored so completely any relevant editorial in a Jewish periodical. Are we to conclude that the Jewish organizations were remiss, that they failed to protect the interests of American Jews—and of American democracy—in time of need? If that is the case, American Jewry will have to do some serious investigating of its own into the affairs of its defense agencies. Too much is at stake, and too much hard-collected money is involved, for American Jews complacently to assume wisdom and courage on the part of their present leadership in that field.

But the greater issue at stake is the possibility that larger numbers of undesirables will be landing on these shores in the coming year. The agitation at the present time seems to concentrate upon raising the number of immigrants from 200,000 to 400,000. And while some of the cruder forms of discrimination may be abolished as a result of the criticism of the present law, the basic evil threatens to remain, namely, the failure to weed out the men and women whose records brand them as Nazis, and Nazi collaborators.

That there are numerous DP's who fall into that category has been amply shown by David Nussbaum, whose articles on this subject have appeared in the *New York Post*. That newspaper is to be commended for its forthright exposure of a danger to our American society.

What makes the responsibility of American Jewry all the greater is the fact that American authorities in Europe are not likely to exert themselves too strenuously in screening out the Nazis. The recent trend in our government's attitude toward the Germans does not inspire the confidence that it will diligently seek out Nazis for exclusion. Reports from Germany indicate that the Nazis are being reinstated into positions of responsibility, that the anti-communist crusade has virtually blinded our government to the vipers we are taking to our bosom.

If, therefore, the authorities do offer to screen the emigrants, the job will probably not be done thoroughly and with sufficient zeal. Jews, who know what Nazism really means, can and should assume the burden of assisting the authorities. This cannot be done by wishful thinking. It demands the setting up of research bureaus, geared to checking and rechecking the files, the dossiers, the vast records which, strangely enough, the Nazis always managed to keep.

Some weeks ago, a great fuss was made about the movie, "Oliver Twist." American Jews were exercised over the possibility of spreading Nazi poison here through a Streicher-type of Jewish character portrayal. This time, the danger is greater. Potential Streichers may themselves be offered hospitality. Why do not the Jewish organizations act?

A NEW STIMULUS TO JEWISH EDUCATION IN AMERICA

THE Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in conjunction with the World Union for Jewish Education, has announced the first examinations in Hebrew language and literature to be conducted as part of a plan for reviving Jewish education in the diaspora. The World Union was organized in the summer of 1947 at a conference, under the University's sponsorship, of Jewish educators from all parts of the dispersion. The establishment of the Union, and more especially the Examination project which it is organizing, illustrate the vital role of the University in the new era ushered in by the founding of

the State of Israel. That role, as we said in our preceding issue, is to serve as the symbol and instrument for the spiritual unification of world Jewry. Dr. Eliezer Rieger, president of the World Union and head of the education department of the University, is now in this country to see these examinations inaugurated. We take this occasion to welcome Dr. Rieger and to express our hope for the success of his mission.

"The Jerusalem Examination," says the circular issued by the World Union, "is conceived as setting a standard for Hebraic studies and a general measuring instrument for achievement. It will serve as a special source of encouragement to students who have worked diligently and faithfully in their Hebraic studies and will indicate to others wherein efforts should be made for correction and improvement. We also hope that the contents of the Jerusalem Examination will serve as a common denominator for Hebraically cultured Jews in all lands of the diaspora."

The project is being launched at an auspicious time. The achievement of statehood for Israel has created in Jews everywhere a new pride which removes the psychological block that has hitherto prevented many a brilliant young Jew from pursuing Jewish studies. The notion that Hebrew is a dead language or, what is worse, only a hieratic language for use in ritual by an exclusive priesthood of rabbis and cantors, is losing its hold on the Jewish masses. Now that the press has familiarized even the Gentile public with such Hebrew words as *yishuv, haganah, negev, halutz, kibbutz* and many others, Hebrew no longer looks dead or outlandish even to the Jew with a deficient Jewish education.

Moreover, increasing numbers of American Jews are beginning to realize that Jews cannot be happy in the diaspora, if the only way that Judaism impinges on their lives is through a few perfunctory rituals, through the resistance to anti-Semitism and through the demands of Jewish philanthropy. They want Judaism to function as a civilization that invests their life with dignity, gives it purpose and direction, inspires worthwhile activity and issues in worthwhile achievement. American Jewry is trying to discover its own soul. But it will not succeed in that quest until it repossesses itself of the Hebrew language. For, without a common language, Jews cannot keep on speaking terms with their fellow-Jews in other lands or with their forefathers in earlier ages. And without that spiritual contact with the mainstream of Jewish life, without identification with the history and destiny of the Jewish people everywhere and at all times, no diaspora community can hope to develop a satisfactory way of life for its members.

To reinstate the Hebrew language and literature should not be as hard as it may seem to some American Jews. American Jewry has suffered from the cultural isolationism of the American environment. That cultural isolationism was the natural concomitant of the political isolationism which prevailed until recent years. But isolationism, cultural or political, is today no longer appropriate to the role of America in the world. America in the future will probably be much more hospitable than it was in the past to cultural activities that give it a better insight into the interests and outlooks of other peoples. It will give more encouragement to the study of other languages and traditions beside those of Anglo-Saxon origin. The increased introduction of Hebrew courses in high schools and colleges is in line with that development.

American Jews, despite the inroads of

assimilation, have not lost the traditional Jewish thirst for learning. The American Jew who aspires to be a cultured person will want to be a cultured Jew, a person of Jewish culture. We are therefore grateful for the help that is coming from Israel, of which the Jerusalem Examination is the first token. May Torah come from Zion in an ever widening and deepening stream to all the corners of the diaspora, fructifying Jewish life everywhere and enabling it to make its distinctive contribution to the civilization of mankind.

THE ALTERNATIVE TO SECULARISM IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A STATEMENT of the Roman Catholic Bishops of the United States, "The Christian in Action," issued on Nov. 20, contains an oft-repeated appeal for governmental encouragement of religious and moral training in the public schools. The appeal was occasioned by recent decisions of the Supreme Court against state-sponsored programs for religious education—as, for example, in the McCollum case, in which the Court ruled against an Illinois released-time law.

The Bishops charge that secularism "has banned religion from tax-supported education and is now bent on destroying all cooperation between government and organized religion in the training of our future citizens." The secularist influence, say the clerics, has given rise to a false intepretation of the First Amendment to our Constitution. That amendment declares, "Congress shall make no laws respecting an establishment of religion or forbidding the free exercise thereof." According to the Bishops, this does not mean the separation of church and state or the forbidding of cooperation between government and religious bodies. It means only that the *Federal Government* cannot extend "preferential treatment to one religion as against another," nor can it "compel or forbid any state to do so."

The question raised by the Bishops is admittedly a difficult one, particularly as applied to religion in the public schools. All religionists are concerned with the gross ignorance of religion that is characteristic of our generation. The only contact most of our college-bred citizens have with religion during their school careers is in a random philosophy course, usually taught by a professor sharply critical of religion. This fact alone is enough to explain the "secularism" of so many young Americans. From an educational standpoint, it is unwise for the public schools to fail to concern themselves with so basic a human experience as religion, in a forthright and objective manner.

The Catholic solution, however, is inacceptable, not only to secularists, but to many American religionists, including ourselves. The Bishops' interpretation of the First Amendment may be correct in stating that the Amendment does not call for non-cooperation with religious bodies by either the Federal or State governments. It is a misinterpretation, however, to assert that the Amendment demands or explicitly approves government support for organized religions in their efforts to penetrate into the public school system. When the First Amendment was adopted, the public school system had not yet been organized. This occurred many years later. Had it been the intention of the government to foster the development of denominational religion in the schools, it would have done so at the outset. For there can be little doubt of the religious

orientation of many of the Founding Fathers. The fact is that early American education was largely in the hands of religious denominations and was financed by *private funds.* When the public school was founded, its claim on government support was based on the assumption that it would be available to all citizens, regardless of religious faith, and that it would also avoid dealing with sectarian religion. The founders of the American public school were well aware that organized religions, each insisting on the superiority of its own doctrines, must exert a divisive influence. And the primary purpose of the public school was to unify.

It is true that the government, state and federal, has recognized the importance of religion as a basic element in the character of the American citizen. This accounts for the tax-exemptions granted to religious institutions and the privilege accorded to religious denominations to conduct parochial schools. These freedoms, however, are far different in their effect than would be the introduction of sectarian religion into the schools.

The danger inherent in introducing religion into the public schools is obvious. For the public school system would then become another battle arena in which religious denominations could carry on their competition for the capture of young souls. When a Catholic speaks of *religion,* he means *Catholicism.* Similarly, many Protestants and Jews conceive of true religion as identical with their own. Religion in the public schools, if introduced and supervised by church and synagogue authorities, would provide an opportunity for bigots to preach their doctrines openly and would further increase tensions that the public school is designed to reduce.

There is only one way to eliminate secularism from American education, and that is by developing a *common* religious interpretation of our American civilization. This implies the need to spiritualize American civic festivals and to create liturgy for their celebration. If this were done, then the public school would be the logical locale for the furtherance of this *American* religion. American civilization is the only neutral ground on which all Americans can meet to give expression to their common humanity and common religious aspiration. There is no reason, other than the exclusiveness of organized religions, why the religious implications of life cannot be taught through the media of American holidays, folkways and heroes. The fact that such an interpretation of Americanism has not been recommended by religionists may be attributed to the failure of the traditional, organized religions to see religion in any other perspective than their own.

The problem of providing our citizens with an intelligent understanding of religion should be dealt with. But any attempt to solve the problems will fail unless a common meeting ground in American civilization can be provided for all religionists. After thus cementing a we-feeling among all Americans, the way would be open for an objective examination, on the high school and college level, of all the great religious traditions. All Americans could then recognize the role of the traditional religions in American culture. That role would be to supplement the common way of life shared by all Americans with the enriching influence of their own distinctive traditions.

REALITIES AND VALUES

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE SPIRITUAL benefits Israel can derive from the existence of the diaspora are the two following items:

More than a hundred American artists, Jewish and non-Jewish, have sent their paintings and sculptures to the Tel Aviv museum as the basis for an American Wing. Those who profess to fear the ghettoizing of Jewry in a Jewish state should take cognizance of the Yishuv's interest in the universal language of art.

In the realm of music, Leonard Bernstein is serving as musical advisor to the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. He is again in Israel and, as reported by Peter Gradenwitz in the New York *Times* of Sunday, November 28, "seems to be having the time of his life. He is appearing in all his concerts as pianist as well as conductor, and his few free evenings he spends in military camps and hospitals to entertain the music lovers there."

▼

THE DEPARTMENT OF EXTENSION Classes of the University of Washington has combined with the Seattle Institute of Adult Jewish Studies in sponsoring courses in Hebrew and Jewish Literature.

The Seattle Institute was established at the initiative of Rabbi Samuel Penner who came to Seattle from Washington only a few months ago. It is a project in which twenty-five Jewish organizations and synagogues participate.

Rabbi Penner, who is interim chairman, sets his sights high. The circular announcing the courses promises additional courses — in Jewish History, Jewish Customs and Festivals, and the Growth of Modern Zionism — if there is sufficient enrollment. The circular continues:

"With proper communal support the SIAJS can be developed into an accredited School for Higher Jewish Learning, a long overdue necessity in Seattle. Moreover, it is quite possible to think of a Chair in Jewish Studies at the University of Washington, as obtains in many first-rate universities in the United States."

A worthy ambition, which we hope will be realized.

▼

THERE HAS BEEN MUCH SPECULATION on the unexpected defeat of the Republican Party in the recent election. Here is one explanation the significance of which goes beyond the occasion that called it forth.

Charles P. Taft, the son of a Republican President and brother of a Republican Senator, and himself a Republican Party member, in addressing the recent convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, ascribed the defeat of his party to the lack of "a human spiritual foundation." "I insist," he is quoted by *Religious News Service* as saying, "that at crises in history it is not self-interest or the economic motive which decides the issue; it is ideals of justice and liberty, and a feeling for God working in human beings."

These are brave and candid words, and they are true.

▼

A DIFFICULT PROBLEM IN JEWISH education is presented by the needs of Jews who live in small villages and even in larger towns that have too small a Jewish population to support a school of their own. The importance of this problem increases in the measure that the Jew becomes integrated in American life. A certain percentage of Jews are bound to prefer the more simple and less hectic life of the rural or suburban community to the tensions of city life. What is to become of their Judaism?

Congregation Shaare Zedek of Detroit, Mich., under the leadership of Rabbi Morris Adler, has given thought to the problem. It has initiated a project of Jewish education by correspondence. This education by mail will be supplemented by arrangements enabling the students to meet with their instructors twice a year, in mid-winter and spring.

▼

THEY SAY AN ENGLISHMAN never knows when he is beaten. That apparently does not apply to English Jews, at least not to all of them. The anti-Zionist Jewish Fellowship, a British organization, has decided to disband. It is the American Council for Judaism, the counterpart of the British Zionist Fellowship, that seems not to know when it is beaten, or it too would graciously pass out of existence.

▼

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY IN Jerusalem has at last established a chair for Yiddish Language and Literature.

That marks the close of an epoch. In the early history of the University and of the Yishuv, the Hebrew language, being in need of resuscitation after having been dead as a vernacular for about twenty-five hundred years, had to put up a hard fight for life. Its rival as a possible national language was Yiddish. Though not as deeply rooted in tradition as Hebrew, Yiddish had the advantage of being spoken by great masses of Jews. As long as there was the shadow of a danger that Yiddish might supplant Hebrew, the zealots among the Hebraists could not afford to concede a place to Yiddish in a national university. They feared to add to its prestige by recognizing it as an important vehicle of Jewish culture.

That period is now definitely at an end. The Hebrew language is by this time so deeply entrenched in Israel that the teaching of Yiddish gives no ground for apprehension.

It would indeed have been safe for some time, to introduce Yiddish into the curriculum of the University, but prejudices inherited from the years of conflict probably militated against its earlier acceptance.

Now, however, the obvious importance of studying and evaluating the rich Yiddish culture of the ruined Jewish centers of Eastern Europe has overcome all prejudice against Yiddish.

The Yiddish language and literature have thus at last won that place in the Hebrew University to which their importance as expressions of the Jewish spirit entitles them.

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THE JEWISH BOOK COUNCIL, sponsored by the National Jewish Welfare Board, is again reminding the public of the observance of Jewish Book Month, from November 26 to December 26.

Though, for obvious reasons, the Book Council has seen fit to designate a limit-

(*Continued on Page* 24)

CORRECTION

We are grateful to Mr. Wendell Malliet, editorial writer of the *Amsterdam News,* for calling our attention to a typographical error which occurred in the article "Anti-Semitism Among Negroes" by Leo Laufer (Vol. XIV. No. 13). On page 15, line 47, an editorial of the *Amsterdam News* was cited, and the date given was August 27, 1948. The correct date is August 27, 1938. We particularly regret the error because it gives a wrong impression of the present policy of the *Amsterdam News.* That policy cannot be construed in any way as anti-Semitic.

—*Editors*

The State of Israel—Its Moral Implications

By DAVID POLISH

WHEN the last defenders were driven behind the barricades of the Second Temple, and when the flames were gutting the sanctuary, the priests took the keys of their office and hurled them heavenward. The priests consigned them to the keeping of Heaven, for both they and the Temple were doomed, and the doors which once had opened at the turn of the key were already crashing down. Those keys were never lost. They were in good keeping for 1,878 years. On the 5th of Iyar, 5708, the Guardian of Israel returned them, not only to the citizens of Israel, but to *kelal Yisrael,* amid world desolation and shattered shrines and amid the never to be dissolved vapors of our people's martyrdom. The keys are now in our hands, either to cast away recklessly by a thousand follies, or else to spring the lock on a new era, for all Jewry, yes, for all mankind.

We have not yet measured up, either emotionally or intellectually, to the incredible impact of what has taken place. There are neither tears nor songs, nor declarations nor discourses which can release the flood of Jewry's anguished yearnings, pent up these many generations. Who knows but what the people of Judea, on that calamitous day, *Tisha B'Av,* in the year 70 C.E., were too stunned and too close to destruction to assess fully the meaning of the destruction. Little did our Judean ancestors know that they were the forerunners of a vast trek in time and space out into the West. And little do we know where the reversal of the journey, now turning backward upon itself, will lead us and our people.

Now that we have witnessed the birth of Israel, we are eager to know what lies in store for it and for *kelal Yisrael.* Until now, our goal was the establishment of the state. From now on, we assume a more remote objective, the conversion of the state into an instrument for the attainment of our sublimest ideals. In attempting to discern the future, we are not indulging merely in clairvoyance. Instead, we are taking the first step toward grappling with the future and harnessing it to our will and casting it into our own image. This is the entire meaning and interpretation of Jewish history —subjugating the future to our people's obstinacy.

The Historians Refuted

In such a venture, that of determining what lies ahead, we must always predicate our thinking upon another great historical truth, that no historical formula, however accurate when applied to other peoples and other civilizations, applies to the Jewish people. We are a unique people and no index file has yet been devised which can contain us. Many nations have been exiled, but none has survived. Many nations have been destroyed, but none has been reborn. There is no record of repeated national resurrection, in cyclical recurrence, save our own. No wonder scholars and philosophers resent our defiance of their theories of history. How naive and how malicious their verdicts, steeped in wishful thought, appear in the light of May 15th. The German Biblical scholar of the Nineteenth Century, Welhausen, whose abuse and torture of our *Tanach* evolved into the abuse and torture of the people of the *Tanach* in the Twentieth Century, hoped to see Israel put out of the way by the expedient of a mercy-killing. "The so-called emancipation of the Jews must in-

evitably lead to the extinction of Judaism. For the accomplishment of this centuries may be required."

Thus he concludes his book called "History of Israel."

Abbott, in summarizing the history of Israel in Europe, ends his work with this plunge into the future: "It is safe to predict that for many centuries to come the world will continue to witness the unique and mournful spectacle of a great people roaming to and fro on the highways of the earth in search of a home."

And the Jewish Marxist, Karl Kautsky, concludes his book, "Are the Jews a Race?" in the same spirit: "We cannot say we have completely emerged from the Middle Ages as long as Judaism still exists among us. The sooner it disappears, the better it will be, not only for society, but also for the Jews themselves. . . . Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, will at last have found a haven of rest. He will continue to live in the memory of man as man's greatest sufferer, as he who has been dealt with most severely by mankind, to whom he has given most."

The Spenglers and the Toynbees, having erected symmetrical structures founded upon the rise, decline and fall of civilizations, have beheld with chagrin the collapse of their edifices for lack of a cornerstone. That cornerstone has been the survival and revival of Jewry, which somehow manages to persist despite its classification by Toynbee as a fossil. Some fossil, which sent the British Empire scurrying out of Palestine in the middle of night, and which drove the British Empire beneath the robes of Arab tribesmen!

The Uniqueness of Israel

Had Christian scholars possessed a degree of humility, they might have sought out Nachman Krochmal, that obscure Galician Jew, who formulated the one authentic interpretation of Jewish history. Reduced to simplest terms, it propounds the concept that, unlike other civilizations, Israel completes cycle after cycle of rise, decline and fall, only to swing out into fresh and newer cycles. Why? Because, unlike all other nations, Israel alone is dedicated to the divine principle of *"haruhani ha-mohlat,"* absolute spirtuality, the passionate quest for which will not let us die. Therefore, despite the historians, the course we take and the future we desire are founded upon the truth of our uniqueness and our refusal to be classified. Israel's obstinacy, based upon its will alone, has prevailed. Theories and postulates will have to accommodate themselves to us, not we to them. The birth of the new state is heavy with implications for our future and the future of mankind.

Because we are a unique people, not to be catalogued, the relations between Israel and the diaspora will also be unique, unlike the relations between any other country and its kinsfolk, citizens of other lands. The fear of the consequences of such a relationship is greater than the wondrous promise of such a relationship. The first illusion that we should dispel is that there must be a center for Jewish life.

Of late, *shelilat ha-golut"* (deprecation of the diaspora) has been superseded by *"shelilat eretz yisrael"* (deprecation of the homeland), the assertion that the State of Israel is spent and weary and barren, and that only from America can vitality enough be generated to sustain world Jewry. This cavalier dismissal of the Yishuv reflects an abysmal ignorance of the life-blood, of the moral plasma which the name Eretz Yisrael itself supplied to a hemorrhaging world Jewry in this Twentieth Century. It ill behooves American Jews to flaunt our spiritual poten-

tials until we have at least drawn abreast of the incredible accomplishments of that tiny Yishuv, whose songs we sing, whose language we learn, whose dramatics we admire, whose culture we emulate.

The conception that there must be a predominant center is as antiquated as the Ptolemaic theory of our globe as the center of the universe. It is as perverse as the totalitarian doctrine that there must be a supreme political power in the world, which dominates all it surveys. Democracy cannot tolerate such theories. It is more receptive to the concept of mutuality, of complementation, of interplay and partnership. Israeli and American Jewry must be related, not as the sun is to the stars, but as one eye is to the other. Each depends upon the other not merely for the combined vision of both, but for its own. When both are healthy, the vision is unimpaired. But when one is blinded, the sympathetic mutuality between the two is affected, and the vision of the other is jeopardized.

While it is true that we in America do not seek citizenship in Israel, we have no intention of abandoning our status as members of a universal Jewish community in which we can identify ourselves freely with our fellow Jews everywhere. Let us not protest too much the obvious truth that we are American citizens and that we owe no allegiance to Israel. This is a gratuitous statement, for it was just as true before May, 1948 as it is now. This kind of disclaimer, if repeated vehemently enough, can lead ultimately to a widening rift which can separate us from Israel so dangerously, that we might become strangers to one another. Jewish history is full of tragic accounts of communities which lost touch with Palestine and withered away, never to be heard from again. The negative approach to our relations with Israel gives deep satisfaction to those American Jews whose philosophy is—*Judaism for the people of Isarel, dejudaizing for us in America.*

The Jewish state will accelerate two processes in America, on the one hand, total assimilation for those who regard the creation of the state as giving them a release from all further Jewish responsibility; and on the other hand, the intensification of Jewish life for those who will want to share in the abundant life which both Israel and America can offer. As members of a universal community, we are bound together by many bonds apart from our particular citizenship, and we need not relinquish any of those bonds, nor reduce our proposed associations with Israel to religion alone, or philanthropy alone. Religion can divide as well as unite. Israel and American Jewry should be like two brothers, living in far-off and distant lands. Each is a citizen of his own country, but both are in constant contact with each other, both help one another, both visit one another, both strive to perpetuate their common memories, both have a unique universe of discourse. To be members of a universal community is something more than to be like the Irish or the Swedes in America. God forbid that ours should become an analogous status, for the time is rapidly aproaching when Irish, Swedes, and other minorities will be swallowed up in the American melting pot.

For the moment, and perhaps for an entire generation, this remains an academic problem. So long as Israel is jeopardized, our task is clear. We did not labor for this day in order to preside over the liquidation of the Jewish State. Let us recall the story of *"Tinok Shenishbah"* (the abducted baby), who was stolen by an evil prince, at the very moment that his parents and the pious people in his home ceased from their prayers. In that split second, when they paused from their work of warding off

the evil spirits, the child was snatched from their midst. There is much work to be done, and woe to us if we abandon it now, in the deluded belief that the evil prince and all his henchmen can no longer harm us.

The moral implications of Israel are not for ourselves alone. In a tribal world, they are universal. They confront civilization with new truths about itself, truths it had not dared to face, and because of its refusal it became brutal and diseased.

A People Rediscovers Its Soul

The first superb spiritual value implicit in Zionism is the rediscovery by world Jewry of its own soul. Nations, like individuals, suffer from all the psychological and spiritual afflictions which plague our world. Peace of mind has fled not only from our personal lives but from entire societies, all of which have a unique consciousness of their own. How much more so has this been the fate of our own people. If we could now visualize the inner world of a foundling, shuttled from one orphan home to another, driven by blows from one institution to another, and if we then multiply this orphan by the myriads of Jews who have lived in Europe these past millenia, we could come to understand the mental snake-pit in which Israel has lived. That he has transcended this pit, refused to go mad, yes, lived gloriously, is an historical miracle. But despite all this, he has felt the brand of rejection, hostility, guilt-accusation, sadism, seared into his inmost being, and the cries of his mutilated soul could be heard down through the centuries.

By the sure instinct with which a hard-pressed victim will often find his own salvation, Israel groped his way unerringly to the redemption of his soul by going back to the earliest sources of his existence, to his earliest memories, to his dimmest childhood recollections. Unaware of the catharsis techniques of psychiatry, Israel, seeking out the inspiration of his prophets and pursuing the course they charted, found for himself the means of spiritual and collective self-redemption which Twentieth Century healers of the mind have learned to apply to the individual.

Perhaps this is why Sigmund Freud entertained such a profound admiration for Theodor Herzl. Fifty years ago both of these titans stepped forth in Vienna, each to conquer a different submerged continent, one the continent of the human psyche, the other the continent of a people's soul. We are informed that when Freud first set eyes on Herzl, he was seized with admiration for this regal man, this reincarnation of a Judean monarch, and he would follow him down the streets of Vienna, just to observe him and to take in his personality.

Was not Freud, the remarkable analyst of human traits, observing something much more profound than Herzl's external charm? Did he not discern in this fellow-Jew a co-worker in the same area of life? Was he not observing the labors of a man who, like himself, was attempting to heal sick souls, and by the identical methods employed by himself? What was Herzl doing? Through his books, his Congresses, his impact upon the Jewish masses, he was making the Jewish people rediscover itself. He was making it reach back into its past, to the origins of its being, to relive its youthful existence, to experience once more the earliest harassing moments of pain and agony and homelessness by which it suffered the initial shocks of hostility. He made Israel grapple with the many contradictions in his own spirit—East and West, the feeling of at-homeness and the feeling of strangeness in the Western world, self-hatred and self-love, the pas-

sion to escape and the urge to isolate himself, national hysteria and national melancholy. And these contradictions, he made his people convince itself, could be dissipated through seeking and wholeheartedly accepting that of which it had in childhood been robbed — its land, its soil, its tender roots. This national self-revelation could come about through a great soul-shaking experience, a national crisis in which the people would tear itself loose from its centuries' old moorings and set its face toward home. This was the therapy which Herzl prescribed. The therapy has been applied. The great healing is bound to set in.

What will be the nature of this healing? It will be a source of blessing not only to the Jewish world, but to the non-Jewish world as well. The great yoke of guilt, of self-accusation which we have borne as a people for ages will fall from our shoulders. This sense of guilt which some of our sophisticates may not have sensed but which manifested itself in their every move, was a heritage of exile as well as of a conviction that because we were in exile we had been and continued to be guilty of a monstrous crime against Providence. "Because of our sins we were exiled from our land" was the perennial explanation of our circumstances. Even in the moment of despising our enemy, we recognized him to be the instrument of our punishment, the rod used by the Almighty to chastize us. Even in martyrdom and in sublimest saintliness we were atoning for our sins. In recent times, those very Jews who contemptuously rejected this theology, adopted a thoroughly despicable theology in its place, an inverted human worship, hatred of one's self.

Once the Jewish people has been restored to Israel, the greatest incentive for guilt-expression will vanish, for if exile has meant punishment for a national offense, return means not merely that a sin has been expiated, but that we have been a people of supreme merit to regain our heritage. The implications of this new view of our existence are enormous.

Implications of Israel's Rebirth for Christianity

Simultaneously, the Christian view of the Jew will undergo a fundamental reversal, like the recession of an evil tide. Much of Christian theology is predicated on the conception of a Jewish crime, the proof of which is exile, the punishment for which is homelessness, the eternal witness of which is the Jewish people itself. The "mark of Cain," "the wandering Jew," are obnoxious epithets which will disappear from the vocabulary and the thinking of the Christian world. If, for two millenia, Christendom believed that Israel was doomed to everlasting wandering, then the very foundations of Christian thought are set upon quicksand; a great crime has been committed, but not by Israel. It is Christendom that must make expiation. The messianic hope of Israel has attained a degree of fulfillment. A whole people has been resurrected from the dead. If all these things can be, then it is Israel's religious message that has been valid—the message of the end of days, the triumph of good over evil, the power of the human will to shape man's destiny—and what becomes of the crime for which our people has been railroaded to punishment and torture? From now on, the true malefactor who has been dwelling at ease in Christendom while an innocent victim has languished in his place in the dungeon, will take on the thorny crown of an uneasy conscience. That is why some Christians fear and oppose the Jewish State, for they know what far-reaching historical consequences will ensue for their institutions and faiths when Israel becomes secure.

Implications for the Extension of Democracy

Another moral implication of Zionism which will be resented by many is democracy. The real source of irritation to Israel's enemies is not strategic considerations, not oil concessions, not East-West relations. It is that the tiny Jewish community of Israel is throwing the entire Middle East into a ferment of social upheaval, which, if unchecked, will mean the end of medieval and modern Fascism in the Arab world. The most infectious element in the world is freedom. It leaps over barriers and its contagion is irresistible. The reactionaries of the world, who constitute the high command of the war on Israel, judge correctly the meaning of the new State. It brings into a world which has known nothing but slavery guaranteed by ignorance, and exploitation insured by a religion of subservience, a revolutionary way of life. It brings the ballot. It brings the rights of labor. It brings leadership selected by the people. It brings full equality for minorities. It brings freedom for women. It brings health and happiness where death was considered the greatest good. When this life penetrates deeply enough into the souls of the millions enslaved by Emirs and by imperialists, the entire rotten structure will collapse. And with the collapse will go the power of a world conspiracy which began in Spain and continues its operations in Israel. When this occurs a vast and vital front in the war against the people of the earth, will be smashed. And Israel will have helped bring this to pass.

Vindication of Optimism

Zionism is a living demonstration to all the world of the truth and the validity of the hopeful outlook in society. Zionism is *the* movement of optimism in our time. When all humanity is in danger of sinking beneath the cold waters of despair, dragged down by steel hooks of hopelessness, our people which has had more cause than any other to surrender to gloom, has lived to see its faith vindicated. The times are ripe for the singers of dirges. Nations and individuals who have become dehydrated of the last drop of joy in life, have taken up the cry *"Kir-u lamekonenot,"* "call in the keening women," for there is a perverse and excruciating satisfaction in beating the breast over tombstones.

This morbidity has even seeped to a degree into Hebrew literature. The mood of morbidity permeates that chilling and sombre drama by Shlonsky which he calls *"Davoy,"* "Pain." It is peopled with lepers and outcasts, with priests who discover themselves to be afflicted with the very leprosy they have come to heal, with a hearse-like ship which comes to bear away all the miserable ones into the peaceful horizons of death. But Shlonsky has not made a cult of his dark outlook. He is read but not lived by. Instead, Zionism has embraced the conviction that, rather than wait to be saved, man must save himself.

We can summarize its world view by *"Af al pi ken,"* "nevertheless." It is contemptuous of the restraints of nature and society. It has had no patience with the gloomy men who invoked economics, sociology, geopolitics, to prove the folly of Palestine as a Jewish State. It weighed economics, sociology, geopolitics and all the other disciplines in one scale and the will of the Jewish people in the other, and the will of Israel outweighed them all in the balance. Man shapes his own destiny, say Judaism and its most dynamic spokesman, Zionism. The long procession of commissions of experts proclaimed that not another dunam could be cultivated, not another Jew could squeeze into the land, that not another miracle could be performed. And in reply,

the reply of unbounded faith and necessity, more dunams were cultivated, more Jews were brought home, more miracles were achieved.

This is the message of hope and redemption which a small nation will proclaim to a desolated age and a world rendered impotent by fear and disillusion. What Israel has achieved by way of self-salvation, all humanity can achieve. In the land, from which the voice of the prophets still reverberates, new voices are yet to be heard, voices which will add volume to the sound of salvation. With one hand they build, with one they wield the sword, and from their lips—comes ringing the call to redemption for all the world.

"Gather me up with the stone of
Jerusalem and set me in the walls
And with mortar seal me in,
And from within my withered
bones will sing,
Proclaiming the Messiah."

Christmas in the Public School—The Problem

By ABRAHAM SEGAL

This is the first of a series of two articles by Abraham Segal, on the attitude Jews should take toward the observance of Christmas in the public schools which are attended by Jewish children. We have here a statement of the problem and of certain proposed solutions, which the author rejects as unsatisfactory. In our next issue we shall publish his own proposed solution to the problem. We invite comment by our readers on the views presented in these articles. EDITORS

EARLY each December, public-school children go all out for Christmas. Decorations, handicrafts, literature, music, dramatics, pageantry—these surround and absorb every child, including the Jews. What shall we do about this involvement of our children in Christian festivity?

"Do Nothing"

Some Jews do not want to tackle the problem at all: they say there is no problem, or anyway not much of a problem.

"Christmas," argued one parent, "is mostly secular, isn't it, not religious? There's so much cultural value to it: it represents the spirit of peace and good will, and we should join everybody in celebrating this spirit."

Any priest or minister will gladly confirm that Christmas and its symbols *are* religious: they are pagan rites taken over by the church, or christological rites, or once-religious rites that time has vulgarized.

But the nature of Christmas is not the real point. The real point is this: Jews who find public-school Christmas easy to bear are often un-Jewish or even anti-Jewish. They miss the peace and good will involved in our Sabbath, our holy days, our prayers, our literature, our history, our music, our home ceremonies; but they eagerly pursue "Jewish-religious" ideals at Christmas-time, when they can do so without seeming either Jewish or relgious. Such Jews endorse a "secular" Christmas because they have already rejected Jewishness.

Another type of parent insists: "Christmas never hurt *me*; *I* lived through it. If the child has a good Jewish home and a good Jewish training, Christmas won't mean much to him."

When we try to pin down the meaning of "hurt" in this statement, we find the parent means Christmas did not *convert* him. This argument is all right as long as we judge public-school Christmas by

its power to turn little Jews into little Christians. But conversion is not the real danger; the real hurts of Christmas show themselves in other ways altogether.

For one thing, *Jewish* children play star roles in Christmas preparations. At least one Jewish name appears under every newspaper picture of schoolroom nativity-scenes; in a typical big-city grade-school paper, the Jewish pupils write most of the Christmas page; in a large high school, Jewish teen-agers, mainly, plan and present the "show." These youngsters find outlets for their talents in the religious life of another group. A Jewish teacher speaks bitterly of a girl with exceptional abilities whose attendance in the Jewish school became so poor she lost interest and left it. She had had to stay after school in public school to rehearse for the Christmas "show."

This is bad. What is worse, our children deal in hypocrisy to curry favor and applause. Another teacher tells of a boy who went in for composing Hebrew cross-word puzzles voluntarily, for the fun of it. He wrote a Christmas-comes-but-once-a-year acrostic for his school paper: "Oh," he explained, "I only did it for the mark. The teacher said anybody who writes for the Christmas page gets an A."

For another thing, Christmas confronts a Jewish child with unfair, difficult choices. If he takes part, he may displease parent, Jewish teacher, or rabbi, and develop a sense of guilt. If he does not take part, he may be singled out for "lack of cooperation," like the children in one school who received a "poor mark" for not sharing in the classroom tree-decoration. The child who lives through these choices unscarred is not qualified when he grows up to give an opinion on their harmlessness; he is not sensitive or intelligent enough.

A half-way sensitive or intelligent child is bound to suffer from references to Jesus, or to Jews in connection with Jesus ("King of the Jews"). Pomp and circumstance sway his young mind toward belief in Christian superiority, toward jealousy of Christian children. Even though a seven-year-old got *eight* gifts on Hanukkah, and even though she got treats and excursions all the holiday week, she still spoke up loud and clear, "eating out" in a restaurant: "Aw, gee, Daddy, everybody else celebrates *Christmas!*"

The sensitive, intelligent child is bound to compare Christmas with Hanukkah (and other Jewish holidays, too), generally at the cost of the latter. Sooner or later he comes to question his Jewishness altogether. "Why," asked a rabbi's son, 'do they sing Christmas songs in school but not Jewish songs? Aren't our songs any good?"

The final hurt comes from the crassness, the bad taste, that inspires the behavior of Christians at Christmas-time. Christian teachers and principals are not trying to convert us; they do not sing us carols out of malice. They only repeat each year activities endorsed by deep-rooted custom and community fanfare. Sometimes we do find an enlightened exception—the teacher, for instance, who gets her Jewish pupils to take their parents Hanukkah gifts and greetings. Mostly, though, Christian school-people decide for us what is and what is not religious, what should and what should not embarrass us. We end, as Jews, with self-scorn and toadying: Jewish parents send Christmas cards to their children's teachers who are also Jews; Jewish children pant for roles in nativity plays; the day before Christmas many high school pupils stay home, but not the Jews—they do not want to miss the Christmas "show."

The third wing of the do-nothing group offers a different argument.

"Most pupils are Christian," says a high school teacher, "and it's unfair to

deprive the majority of the chance to sing carols and decorate trees in school. My classes are 85 percent Christian; in the weeks before Christmas, when I ask them what they'd like to sing, they want carols. Why shouldn't they have them?"

The "majority" argument is not an argument at all; it is simply an excuse for surrendering to a situation we really do not like. Applying this "argument" winds up in silliness and nonsense. If we really accept "majority" rule, we will take religious polls of daily attendance in December; if enough Christians are absent we won't sing carols (or do absent children vote by proxy?) If we are going to conduct a real vote on this thing, we should have discussion first; we should offer the choice of other music besides carols; we should ballot in secret to protect the "Jewish" vote.

This sounds silly, but it gets worse the farther you go. Imagine a school in Eretz Yisrael, where a Jewish 80 percent wants to sing *Yigdal* Friday afternoons. This hymn strongly defends Judaism, and strongly attacks certain principles of Christians and Mohammedans. Do we tell the non-Jewish 20 percent: *Yigdal* is *not* religious, it's beautiful poetry and beautiful music, it has great cultural value, so what is wrong with it, and besides the majority wants to sing it, and will be displeased if anyone objects?

Do not think for a moment this is an impossible example. At leat one congregation has announced officially that, in schools with a Jewish "majority," it wants Hanukkah celebrated instead of Christmas. Once we agree this makes sense, anything goes.

The majority may shout for peace and good-will so loud and long that even the minorities begin to shout too; but the *proof* of peace and good-will is the *care for minorities,* not the shouting. It is just as important, in democratic living, to find out what minorities think as it is to bow to majority will. True peace and good-will demand cultural fair-play; and fair-play is tested not by majority rule but by minority welfare. If one child in a school is Jewish out of a thousand who are not, the thousand still have no right to make the one suffer in conscience; and if they make him suffer in the name of peace and good-will they double the wrong.

The last group of do-nothing Jews is openly and honestly afraid.

A teen-ager listens to adults beat around the bush at a synagogue forum on Christmas, and speaks up: "But if we say anything about it in school, they misunderstand us. That does us more harm than good!"

True, Christians are puzzled by the whole problem. Many of them cannot imagine a person (or group of persons) for whom Christmas is *not* a jolly way of life. Like their forebears, they feel superior to Jews (or any other group), and so conclude we are "stubborn" and "hard-hearted" in refusing to accept this evident superiority.

Consider the rabbi who invaded a teachers' meeting of a nearby school. He said plainly what was wrong with Christmas celebration, and also with weak-tea notices of Hanukkah; and he invited them to cast out both celebrations as the offspring of an unlawful mating between church and state. He horrified the teachers; and within a few hours a neighbor minister telephoned to warn him (and all other local Jews) to leave the community if he did not like the way things were done thereabouts.

Or the rabbi who challenged carolling in schools; his own congregation took full-page newspaper ads to renounce him and all his works. Or the teacher who refused to teach carols; his superiors

hounded him until he left the profession altogether.

We ourselves have cultivated fertile ground for ill-feeling. We have done this by our haste and recklessness, and especially by acting on our own as individuals. The result is: Christians eye us askance as trouble-makers, and Jews hesitate in limbo between pride and fear.

So much is true; but the danger of ill-will should influence our *methods*, not our *goal*. Assume we have planned a sound program on the Christmas problem — then the threat of unpleasantness should not cancel the program, but should guide and direct it. In fact, a *sound* program will of itself weaken this threat, and will of itself steer us right. Of this, more later.

"Abolish Christmas"

Rabbi X has an entirely different attitude: public-school Christmas, he feels, is wrong, and so we should demand its removal altogether from the public-school program.

Rabbi X is hard to reason with (apart from the question of risk and danger) mainly because he has an impossible program and can afford to argue for it wildly. Let us be clear that Christmas can *not* be erased from public education. It is entrenched too strongly, and Christians are not open to argument on the issue; no possible approach can avoid ill-feeling.

Last year, in New York, an educator revived a forty-year-old ban on singing carols. Not one Christian in a million understood his motive, or examined his reasoning, or even realized any need for action. He was overruled, the ban withdrawn; and Christendom breathed a collective sigh of relief as though the holy citadels of Heaven itself had been saved from breaching.

Even a fine Christian like Daniel A. Poling cannot keep cool on this subject. In his *New York Post* column, "Americans All," he once laid the matter before us: "Even though a law may forbid religious instruction in public schools, to interpret the law to bar the singing of carols is quite as bad as burning the books in Nazi Berlin."

Rabbi X may talk all he pleases about church-and-state separation, and sectarian practices, and denominationalism, and other high-flung abstract principles and counter-principles. The fact remains, that if we attack Christmas, we will be likened to Satan, or Hitler, or both. And we will *not* get rid of Christmas.

Anyway, realism reminds us, our children get large dosages of Christmas *outside* school; stores, radios, ads, periodicals, neighboring homes and lawns and streets, all join in the "spirit" of the season. Nothing done or not done in school affects these agencies.

Further, we have other religious and pseudo-religious activities in school: daily Bible reading; release-time, dismiss-time, religious-instruction programs; Bible clubs, "Hi-Y" clubs (sponsored by the YMCA); recitations of grace (with and without the Son and the Holy Ghost) at commencements, class-days, and banquets. Once we wage total war on Christmas, we must also take on all the other religious activity in schools.

"Well, why not?" demands Rabbi X. "Don't all these things violate the principle of separation of church and state?"

The answer is: Church and state may be separated nicely in history books and sermons; in practice, school life all over America involves religion. So do our courts, public meetings, newspapers, radios, motion pictures, and fiction. A major operation to cut religion out of school life, if it did not fail, would kill the patient. We would have to abolish swearing on the Bible in court, prayers and benedictions at meetings, sermons in

he press and on the air, movies about haracters who go to church or work in church, and we would have to put a ostal ban on books and magazines that mbarrassed any one group.

This is silly, no "principle" authorizes s to strike from the list of school activ-ies one representing so wide an area of uman life. Maybe children share in this ctivity in the wrong way, but that does ot mean we must banish the activity; only means we have to figure out *better way.* The principle of church-ate separation is supposed to prevent hysical or economic or legal mistreat-ent of minorities, and it does *not* apply spiritual or psychological matters. You an legislate against religious qualifica-ons for holding office, but you cannot egislate against tactlessness, indelicacy, r embarrassment. You certainly cannot egislate understanding and acceptance of thers. You simply cannot take out of ducation every human activity that rouses controversy or annoyance; what ould you have left?

Add Hanukkah"

Rabbi Y is against public-school Christ-as as much as anyone else, but he takes hat he calls a more practical approach. *e* wants to introduce *Hanukkah* into hools; he wants it observed, or at least cognized, alongside the Christian festi-al. Sometimes Rabbi Y argues by the umber of Jewish children in a given hool; sometimes he talks of Christmas-anukkah as "the lesser of two evils."

Many Christians would not object. The bbi who was told to get out of the ighborhood if he could not bear public-hool Christmas was consoled later on another local minister. This man, in e spirit of Voltaire, supported the bbi's right to free speech, but urged him try a different tack. "Why don't you," he urged, "come into the schools too, with your Hanukkah?"

An appealing offer! But what can Hanukkah do about the wrongs of Christmas, besides a little ego-building for Jewish pupils? In practice, Christmas-Hanukkahs are not handled right or done well; teacher after teacher who has tried them reports disappointment and dissatisfaction.

The incidents we hear of would be comical, if we were not involved ourselves. One junior-high principal (non-Jewish) invited his Jewish teachers to stage a Hanukkah celebration; he even offered to forego the Christmas celebration entirely that year as an experiment. It turned out that most of the teachers were ashamed of being Jews, had been trying to hide the fact; and here they were, asked to present a Jewish holiday to the school! Some of them did; but the result was so poor, it brought snickers and insults from the Christian children.

Another principal (Jewish) called on his Jewish teachers for a Christmas-Hanukkah program. They did all right for Christmas, but they bogged down on Hanukkah; they did not know enough about its songs, materials, and ideas.

Certain High School Fellowshippers (mostly Jews) put on a two-holiday exhibit. A synagogue lent them its large, impressive menorah; this overshadowed the miniature figures of the creche scene, and worried the exhibitors. A teacher (Christian!) pointed out that the school was full of Christmas symbols, so it was fair to emphasize the menorah here as counter-balance. Is this the frame of mind, the attitude toward Christmas and Hanukkah, that we desired for either our Christian or our Jewish students? Hardly!

Such Christmas-Hanukkahs do more harm than good: they strengthen the false identification of Jewish with Chris-

tian holidays that we already make. In a kindergarten game-dance taught in honor of Hanukkah in a Jewish school, one tot summed up the state of affairs: "Hanukkah is just the same as Christmas, my mother says!" Pesah, of course, is the "Jewish" Easter, "your" Easter, "our" Easter. There is no Jewish gain from this kind of bargaining.

But even a well done Hanukkah program can be a form of Jewish self-insult. Hanukkah is only one of our festivals, and a minor one at that; but we exalt it above all our holidays by giving it public-school celebration. Thus we magnify it beyond all reason, and establish it as a major holy day in our children's minds. Why? Because Hanukkah falls in with Christmas. This is *not* a healthy reason for "reconstructing" a Jewish holiday!

Hanukkah can *not* compete with Christmas, or leaven it, or weaken its influence, no matter how impressively it is presented. The Christian child watching Hanukkah is not on par with a Jewish child watching Christmas. The Christian child can accept Hanukkah (or any other element of Judaism): his faith grew out of Judaism, and contradicts nothing in pre-Christian Judaism. The Jewish child can *not* accept Christmas: his faith—in fact, the very existence of Jews as a people—contradicts and rejects Christianity. The story of Judah Maccabee endorses the Christian child's beliefs; the story of the infant Jesus negates the Jewish child's beliefs.

Needed: a Basic Program

We may say, then, that we cannot tolerate the present situation, but neither can we find help in trying to delete Christmas or insert Hanukkah. The facts, the chances of ill-will, above all our own dignity and pride, force us to probe deeper and more delicately into the problem.

Random Thoughts

There can be no greater *hillul hashem* than for Jews to condone the cynical philosophy of terrorism summed up in the well known parody of the comparison of adjectives: "Get on, get honor, get honest."

* * *

When man exalts his human ambitions to divine absolutes, he becomes demonic.

* * *

So long as the yardstick by which we measure human progress changes, it will be impossible to tell whether man makes any progress.

* * *

Rhythm in self-expression is both effect and cause of deeply felt emotions. The *Hasid* chanted and swayed to measure when he prayed.

No religious ritual—however acceptable to the mind and the heart—can stir us, unless accompanied by the rhythm of music, the dance or the march.

* * *

One of the main causes of war is that we have not learned to enjoy peace.

* * *

A sympathetic interpretation of the miracle stories in the Bible is to treat them not as a record of physical but of psychological miracles, that is, of "abiding astonishment" at events that were intrinsically natural.

But we now need another psychological miracle to get people to appreciate the significance of "abiding astonishment."

* * *

Those who allow their thinking to be

ort-circuited should not complain that e light of faith and reason has gone t of their lives.

* * *

Hume the skeptic and Hobbes the dog-atist were Tories. Spencer the agnostic d Gladstone the believer were Liberals.

Problem: Is the lack of correlation tween one's religion and one's politics od or bad?

* * *

The kind of religion that was adequate the past is as inadequate for our spirit-l needs, as the little red school house for our intellectual needs.

* * *

To refuse to have anything to do with ligion because of the abuses to which is subject is like refusing to breathe cause the air is full of harmful germs.

* * *

Despite the assumed interaction be-een body and mind, no one who dreams at he is basking in the sun wakes up nned.

* * *

There are three kinds of people: yes-en, no-men and but-men. The first are ring, the second provoking, the third ovocative.

* * *

The inherent potency of man's free-m of the will, as compared with that his heredity and environment, may be more than that of a spark, as com-ared with that of a powder magazine.

As long as we have rules against smok-g in the vicinity of a powder magazine, e believe in human responsibility, whe-er or not we admit it in theory.

* * *

The seeming permanence of Reform ngregations is due to their being con-antly renewed by former members of onservative congregations, of Conserv-ive congregations by former members Orthodox congregations, of Orthodox congregations by former members of traditionalist congregations.

They are very much like seafoam which, though actually dissolving, is ever present, because it is always being renewed from below.

* * *

If unlearning were as easy as learning, education would not be the great risk it is.

* * *

The department stores have far more effective ways of popularizing religious festivals than the churches or synagogues.

* * *

When we speak of intangible values which make life worth living, we tend to forget that they are relationships between tangible things and inconceivable without them.

Even wireless transmission of electricity implies transmitting and receiving sets.

* * *

In ordinary parlance, when we say, "God knows," we confess ignorance.

In theology when we say, "God knows," we cover up ignorance.

* * *

American Jewry lives from hand to mouth, in that its public causes and communal institutions have no reserves to fall back on.

And it lives from mouth to hand, in that, instead of building up permanent sources of revenue, it relies, for meeting its budget, upon the oratory of its campaigners.

* * *

The one thing our people will have to learn about Eretz Yisrael is that, nationally, as well as individually, "you can't go home again."

* * *

Whatever we yearn for most is our religion—whether it be salvation, power or fame.

The organization or institution which

helps us get what we yearn for most is our church or synagogue — whether it be the house of God, the exchange, the market place, the academy, the labor organization, the fraternal order or the luncheon club.

M.M.K.

Correspondence

Two Tributes to Our Influence

Sirs:

When I read in THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST the report on the motion picture activity of our *Hebrew Arts Foudation,* I was very grateful for the interest in our accomplishment and endeavor.

I want, however, to point out to you a very happy result of that printing. I am in receipt of a great many letters from every part of the country, and receiving more every day. I can tell that, even in those letters that do not mention THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST. I am normally one of those anonymous people known as "Film Board, Hebrew Arts Foundation," but now, since your magazine referred to me by name, the letters are addressed to me personally.

There can be no doubt that this attests not only to the wide circulation of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, but the seriousness and avidity with which the readers peruse and act upon the contents.

May I join in the commendations and thanks.

BEN GRADUS,
Co-Chairman,
Film Board of Review,
Hebrew Arts Foundation

Sirs:

I thought you would be interested in knowing that we are receiving an unusually large number of letters requesting our Mothers Institute materials. These letters are a direct result of my article which appeared in *The Reconstructionist.*

Some of these letters have come from many distant points of the country, California, Indiana, Virginia and many, many other cities. The rabbis and teachers in these cities are most enthusiastic about this project. The Women's League of the United Synagogue has ordered a number of these pamphlets and the project will be carried out in many cities.

MARK M. KRUG,
Executive Director Bureau of Jewish Education, Buffalo, N. Y.

BOOKS RECEIVED

SHOLOM ALEICHEM PANORAMA, edited by Melech Grafstein. Contains, in addition to a foreword by the editor, an introduction by Solomon Liptzin and seven "books": (1) Essays on Sholom Aleichem, (2) Works of Sholom Aleichem, (3) Memoirs of Sholom Aleichem, (4) Dramatic Works of Sholom Aleichem, (5) Yiddish Folk Songs (words and music), (6) Sholom Aleichem Gallery (reproductions of paintings and drawings of his characters), (7) Letters of Sholom Aleichem, (8) Sholom Aleichem Theatre Album. A handsomely bound and illustrated volume. 415 pp. Published by The Jewish Observer, London, Ontario, Canada, 1948.

THE JWB SURVEY, by Oscar I. Janowsky, with the Report of the JWB Survey Commission by Salo W. Baron, Chairman, and a Foreword by Frank L. Weil, President, National Jewish Welfare Board. With Index, xxxiv + 490 pp. The Dial Press, New York, 1948. $5.00.

REALITIES AND VALUES

(*Continued from Page* 10)

ed period of time for concentrating the public's attention on the importance of reading, buying, writing and publishing Jewish books, its own work is not a one-month affair. It engages all year round in an interesting variety of activities looking to the same purpose.

As part of the process of assimilating the culture of the Western World, the Jew has become less bookish. He has taken to sports, games, dancing, shows, and to indulgences in more vulgar pleasures. Perhaps his forefathers of a few generations back were *too* absorbed in books and lived too much in a world either of fantasy or of dialectic. But the modern Jew, particularly in America, has swung too far to the other extreme.

Book Month and the activities of the Book Council should help restore the balance. America is now *potentially* the most important center of Jewish culture in the diaspora; the revival of the habit of reading, especially of reading Jewish books, should make it *actually* such.